



For the record

Planning and Development Committee
Public Hearing – February 1, 2013

Testimony of
Betsy Crum, Executive Director
Connecticut Housing Coalition

Oppose: H.B. No. 5295 – *An Act Concerning the Possessions of Evicted Tenants*

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Betsy Crum and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Housing Coalition. The Housing Coalition represents the broad, vibrant network of community-based affordable housing activity across the state. Our more than 250 member organizations include nonprofit developers, human service agencies, resident associations, and diverse other housing practitioners and advocates. Founded in 1981, the Coalition works to expand housing opportunity and to increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing in Connecticut.

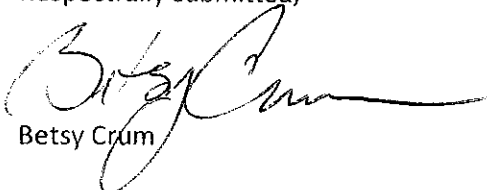
I am writing today to ask that you reject H.B. 5295, *An Act Concerning the Possessions of Evicted Tenants*. This proposal would reverse a very important practice that has stood the test of time for 120 years. Presently, municipalities pick up and hold the possessions of evicted tenants for at least 15 days, giving them the opportunity to preserve what are often the only possessions they have. The proposed bill would repeal that requirement, putting the responsibility back on the tenant and, by nature of the process, at the mercy of the landlord.

The current law is a public health, safety and welfare responsibility that has been in place since 1895, providing an important buffer between landlords and tenants. Evictions can and often are contentious events, and requiring them to confront each other in the midst of a legal battle is a recipe for conflict. Further, many tenants undergoing eviction have little understanding of the process that is forcing them from their homes. Their property, which consists of irreplaceable personal items and official papers, is often all they have left when they lose their housing.

Unlike with some of the "unfunded mandates" that are the topic of this hearing, the municipality is truly the best entity to deal with tenant possessions, as they are neutral parties in the action. They are also in a position to reduce the number of evictions through third-party intervention, perhaps by brokering a voluntary move-out or by connecting tenants with services that may enable them to remain in their homes. With their rather limited participation, municipalities often have a big impact on this process.

I urge you to consider the "win-win" role that municipalities have played in protecting tenants' possessions after an eviction, and to reject H.B. 5295. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,


Betsy Crum